



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Riparian Buffer Management/Maintenance Job Sheet Kentucky

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

January 2002

DEFINITION

This job sheet provides management and maintenance requirements for a riparian buffer under a CREP contract. This information is considered to be part of the CREP contract. Refer to information on the CRP-1 form for the applicable contract period.

CREP program rules include specific guidance regarding how vegetative cover should be managed both during and after the establishment period. The following outlines this guidance:

MANAGEMENT DURING THE ESTABLISHMENT PERIOD:

The Riparian Buffer Conservation Practice Job Sheet for CREP should be referenced for information on proper practice establishment. The establishment period begins immediately following planting and continues until NRCS signs the final status review indicating successful practice implementation. This period should normally extend one or two growing seasons beyond the planting date.

During this establishment period, control of excessive weedy competition is important. Areas within the riparian buffer that were planted to native grass may be top clipped as needed until the practice is determined by NRCS to be fully established. Mowing heights should be as high as possible and should not be lower than 8 inches.

Chemical control can also be used to control competition during the establishment period. Cost-share will only be paid for herbicide applications that are in the contract or are added to the contract prior to herbicide application. All herbicides must be used according to label recommendations.

Mowing between tree/shrub rows may also be done as needed until the stand is determined by NRCS to be fully established. Herbicide applications on woody vegetation must be according to Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) recommendations. Consult with a KDF forester for recommendations prior to applying herbicide on woody vegetation established under a CREP contract. Cost-share will only be paid for herbicide applications that are in the contract or are added to the contract prior to herbicide application.

Prescribed burning may also be used to aid in the establishment of native grasses when recommended by a Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources biologist. See the prescribed burning section of this job sheet for requirements when planning or conducting a prescribed burn.

Requirement to reestablish vegetation on unsuccessfully established areas will be determined through annual status reviews and will be based on whether the practice is functioning properly.

MANAGEMENT AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT PERIOD:

The guidance below applies on CREP acreage after the planned cover is determined by NRCS to be fully established. Refer to the NRCS "final" status review to determine when NRCS has rendered this determination.

When the planned cover is determined to be fully established, the following guidance applies:

1. No annual mowing or disking of an entire field or the same portion of a field for generic weed control and/or for cosmetic purposes. (An area may be mowed only once during a two-year period.)

2. Areas between tree/shrub rows may be mowed only once during a two-year period.
3. No haying or grazing operations except in certain emergencies as authorized by Farm Service Agency.
4. All mowing and strip disking operations shall cease during the period between May 15 and July 15 in order to avoid interference with grassland bird nesting activities.
5. Harvesting timber on contract acreage is not allowed during the contract period.
6. Control of undesirable plants (such as Johnsongrass, Kudzu, Thistles, Multiflora Rose), noxious species, insects, and other pests to a level that prevents adverse impacts to surrounding lands is allowed if herbicides are the sole control method.
7. Mowing, herbicide applications, and/or prescribed burning are not required as long as an approved cover as determined by NRCS is maintained.

The participant is responsible for maintaining the riparian buffer according to the conservation plan throughout the contract period. This responsibility includes livestock exclusion and controlling soil erosion along with controlling diseases, insects, undesirable plants, and noxious weeds to a level that does not adversely affect the long-term sustainability of the established species or that poses offsite drift problems. The participant should make periodic checks of the enrolled acreage to assure that all practices are functioning properly.

Additional Management Alternatives For Zone 3 When Established To Native Grasses

To further enhance wildlife habitat, delay mowing activities until the period between August 1 and September 1. This is a recommendation and not a requirement.

A. Mowing

Strip Mowing: Mow one-third of the field in strips (once annually). Mowing of the field should be completed by mowing strips that are a minimum of 30 feet and a maximum of 50 feet

wide, then skipping an area between 60 and 100 feet in width. This spacing will establish a pattern whereby the mowed strips are separated by two unmowed strips that are one and two years old.

Mowing Half. Mow one-half of the field once the first year and mow the other half the second year. Continue this two-year rotation.

Mowing All. Mow the entire field (one time) every two years.

B. Strip Disking (No strip disking of areas planted to tress and/or shrubs.)

Any disking on CREP acres shall be done according to the following strip disking criteria.

1. CRP participants may perform light disking on native grasses that are at least four years old that are located at least 180 feet away from the resource being buffered. An area may not be disked more than once in a two-year period.
2. Strip disking should be completed by lightly disking strips that are a minimum of 30 feet and a maximum of 50 feet wide, then skipping an area between 60 and 100 feet in width. This spacing will establish a pattern whereby the disked strips are separated by two undisked strips that are one and two years old.
3. Strip disking should be planned for the least erosive parts of a field and not in places where gully formation is a problem. Disking should not be done in the late fall or winter when vegetation will not regrow soon after the disking.
4. Strip disking operations shall be performed along field contours as nearly as practical.
5. Strips shall be lightly disked to leave a minimum of 30 percent residue remaining on the soil after disking operations are complete.

B. Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burning of native grasses established in Zone 3 may be done once every three years.

Areas planted to or in existing trees and/or shrubs will be protected from prescribed burning.

A prescribed burn plan must be prepared in advance of the prescribed burn by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR). The participant will be responsible for adhering to the KDFWR burn plan and all local and state laws applicable to open burning in Kentucky.

Disked firebreaks shall be placed according to the KDFWR burn plan. Firebreaks shall be located along field contours as near as practical to reduce erosion potential.

When possible divide larger fields into several blocks to be burned in different years. This will result in mosaic of vegetative successional stages thereby improving wildlife habitat.

D. Combinations of Mowing, Strip Disking, and Prescribed Burning

Combinations of these management alternatives are acceptable provided the same acreage is not mowed, disked, and/or burned more than once during a two-year period. (Example: The same acreage can not be mowed one year and burned the next.)